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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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North Yemen

Results of Hamdi's Middle Eastern Trip

North Yemeni strongman Ibrahim Hamdi apparently succeeded in garnering new economic and military aid for Sana as well as buttressing his position at home and abroad during his recent six-nation Middle Eastern tour. Hamdi's warm reception in all countries visited contrasts sharply with the relatively unsuccessful trip he made earlier this summer to the Persian Gulf.

Hamdi was reportedly bowled over by the pomp of his reception in Tehran. The Yemenis gave the Iranian a shopping list of development projects including a military airport and road construction worth between \$100 and \$200 million. The final communique, issued at the end of Hamdi's stay in Tehran, made only a general reference to the expansion of bilateral economic relations, but the Yemenis came away with the strong impression that Tehran intends to be forthcoming.



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Hamdi came away from Baghdad convinced that he now has the support of the Iraqi government. In mid-1974 Baghdad was implicated in a plot to overthrow the North Yemeni government--a situation which eventually led Hamdi to seize power when

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the government in Sana declined openly to blame Baghdad for its interference. The Iraqis have now assured the North Yemeni president that they will no longer back Yemeni Baathist subversion against his regime.

In Damascus, Hamdi got promises of Syrian personnel to assist in a number of fields including agriculture, health and finance.

According to the US embassy in Sana, Hamdi's circuit of Arab capitals resulted in several political pluses. North Yemen has long felt itself outside the mainstream of the Middle East. The Yemenis believe, on the basis of the reception Hamdi received in each country, that Sana now stands a chance of breaking out of this isolation. Domestically, the economic aid and recognition he picked up on the trip should go far in silencing Hamdi's critics on both the left and the right.
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Israel-UNESCO

Exclusion Issue

Little progress is likely to be made toward improving Israel's relations with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) when the executive board of that organization meets next week. Both the Israelis and the UNESCO leadership are opposing moves--primarily undertaken by the US--to integrate Israel into a UNESCO regional group and thus overturn last year's decision by the general conference to exclude Israel from regional group membership.

Despite previous indications that he would support Israel's attendance at an October European regional group meeting, UNESCO's director general recently reversed this commitment and said that he will not invite Israel to attend the meeting. The director general [redacted] argued that Israel has shown no signs of increasing its cooperation with his organization. He also stated that it was largely due to his influence that the Israeli expulsion resolution was moderated at the OAU Kampala meeting, and he considers this a much more significant accomplishment.

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The Israelis, for their part, have indicated their opposition to any moves to integrate them into the European group through a resolution of the executive board. They fear that their admission through this back door method will lessen US and European pressure on next year's general conference to reverse its earlier decision. Moreover, they argue that even if the executive board recommends Israel's membership, next year's conference is not bound to follow this recommendation.

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The Israelis, in asking the Belgians last week not to introduce any resolution seeking to admit Israel to the European group, showed concern that the US Congress might seize on a favorable decision, for instance, as evidence of progress toward a solution of the problem. sufficient to warrant lifting of the Congressional restriction of US contributions. The Israelis feel that what is happening to UNESCO because of its financial plight serves as a warning to other UN bodies against adopting such measures.

The continuing stalemate on this issue raises doubts about the UN agency's future. The expulsion issue has led the US Congress to suspend the US' annual contribution, which provides for about 25 percent of UNESCO's budget, and the Arab states who mounted the anti-Israel campaign last year have not come through with sufficient loans to make up for UNESCO's deficit. Some UNESCO officials are now discussing an extraordinary session of the general conference to try to solve the problem. (CONFIDENTIAL/NO FOREIGN DISSEM/BACKGROUND USE ONLY)

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